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SPECIFICATION

Color correction system and method

This invention relates to the color correction of video signals, and particularly to the automatic color correction of such signals. This patent describes improvements upon the color correction systems and methods described in the "Rainbow" Patent 4,096,523, the "Luminance" Patent 4,410,908, and the "Anamorphic" Patent 4,223,343 whose disclosures hereby are incorporated herein by reference.

There is a continuing need to improve the efficiency, speed and accuracy of color correction of video signals, especially in film-to-tape or tape-to-tape transfers, and particularly in scene-by-scene color correction. It is an object of the invention to provide such improvement.

There also is a need for improvement in the means available for segregating specific areas of video pictures for analysis and examination. It is a further object of the invention to provide such improvement.

There also is a continuing need for improvement in automatic color correctors, especially in automatic color balancing circuits. It is desired to increase their effectiveness, despite the presence of pastel (low "chroma") colors which normally make most such circuits useless. The inventors also have recognized a need to improve the effectiveness of such circuits in equipment in which the luminance signal can be varied separately.

In accordance with one aspect of the present invention, an automatic color corrector is used to develop color correction signals for storage and later use in scene-by-scene color correction. This greatly speeds the color correction process. Preferably, the automatic corrector automatically balances the three primary colors, red, blue and green with respect to one another.

In another aspect of the invention, the portion of the video picture which is tested during color correction is limited to a preselected area or "window" which is less than the area of the full picture. This allows the color corrector to concentrate upon a specific portion of the picture which has a specific color or monochrome content.

Preferably this arrangement is used with an automatic color corrector which samples only the video signals within the preselected area. Then, the corrections so derived are stored and utilized when the corrected signals are recorded on video tape, or the corrections are used immediately during broadcasts.

The speed of color correction is improved by the use of an automatic color corrector. The use of the window greatly improves the effectiveness and accuracy of the automatic corrector. For example, the window can be used to prevent the sampling of large pastel colored areas such as light blue sky, pastel walls, etc., the sampling of which often makes prior automatic color balancing circuits useless.

The selected area or "window" preferably is

essentially any part of the video picture, and can be changed in size. Its size can be made very small so that it samples a small area of the picture which is black or gray or white, or has a specific color or monochrome characteristic to be sampled, or it can be made very large, if that suits the purpose at hand.

When used in a scene-by-scene color corrector, the combination of the window and an automatic color balancing circuit can be used to greatly speed the initial color balancing of each scene. If the balance achieved for one scene is suitable for use in others, it can be stored and reutilized, with or without modifications, thus further speeding the color correction process.

In a color corrector which produces separate luminance signals and provides for the separate variation of the characteristics of such signals, the automatic color balancing circuit balances the red, green and blue video signals with respect to the luminance signal. This allows the luminance signal to be changed without greatly impairing the chrominance-to-luminance ratio. This defect would create colors with a poor appearance due to wrong color intensity. Since the luminance signal is used as reference, the other signals will change appropriately when the luminance signal is changed.

In the accompanying drawings:—

Figure 1 is a schematic circuit diagram of a color correction system constructed in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 2 is an electrical waveform diagram utilized in explaining some of the principles of the present invention;

Figure 3 is an electrical schematic circuit diagram of a portion of the color correction system of the invention;

Figure 4 is a schematic circuit diagram of another portion of the color correction system of the invention;

Figure 5 is a schematic circuit diagram of another portion of the system of the invention;

Figures 6 and 7 are waveform diagrams explaining additional features of the present invention; and

Figure 8 is a perspective view of an alternative component utilized in accordance with the present invention.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The color correcting system 10 shown in Figure 1 includes a motion picture projector or other source 16 which delivers color motion picture images to a film chain 18 which converts the visible images into video signals. Control units 12 and 14 are provided, together with a computer 30 and interconnecting cables 24, 26, 32, 34, 35, 36 and 38, to control the color correction of the video signals. The color-corrected video signals then are delivered to a video tape recorder 20 which produces a color-corrected video tape record 22 of the program.

It should be understood that the invention is not limited to the use of a film chain as a source of video signals. The source 16 also can be a video

camera, or any other means for developing or storing color video signals. As another alternative, the output of the system can be delivered directly to transmitter for broadcasting rather than to a video information storage device.

The full details of the system 10 have not been set forth in this description since they are described sufficiently in the patents mentioned above. Reference should be made to those patents for further details.

CONTROL PANELS

The control panel 12 includes a group 40 of color balance controls, hue and saturation controls 56 and 58, and two groups 44 and 68 of luminance controls.

The color balance, hue and saturation controls are substantially the same as the corresponding controls described in the "Rainbow" and "Luminance" patents identified above. A row of four control knobs 50 is provided for adjusting and correcting the gain of "R", "B", "G" and "Y" (red, blue, green and luminance) signals in the film chain. Similarly, a row 52 of three knobs is provided to correct the gamma of those signals, and a third row 54 of knobs is provided to correct the pedestal factor of those signals.

Three rows 56, 58 and 68, consisting of six potentiometers each, are provided, one for adjusting the saturation, one for adjusting the hue and one for adjusting the luminance of the six color derivative signals, yellow, cyan, green, magenta, red and blue.

The luminance controls 44 and 68 are the same as those bearing the same reference numerals in the "Luminance" patent 4,410,908 mentioned above. The luminance gain control 62 is the same as the "Density" control; the luminance gamma control 64 is the same as the "LCPM" control; and the luminance pedestal control 66 has the same name and function as in the latter patent.

In accordance with the present invention, there is provided an automatic balance circuit 70, a "window" generator 72, and a window control panel and unit 74.

The automatic balance circuit includes a balance comparator circuit 76 which is connected by lines 86 to receive the red, blue, green and luminance signals from the film chain 18.

The balance comparator circuit 76 delivers signals over output lines 88 to a timing logic circuit 78 which receives synch and other timing signals from the film chain 18 and the computer 30 over lines 87 and controls the operation of a storage matrix circuit 80 and an A/D converter 82. Signals are sent from the timing logic circuit 78 over lines 90 to the storage matrix 80, and the storage matrix 80 delivers signals over lines 93 to the A/D converter 82 whose operation is controlled, in part, by scan address signals delivered over lines 92.

The output of A/D converter 82 is sent over an output line 93 to the output circuits for the color balance potentiometers 40, where the color correction signals developed by the circuit 70 are combined with the potentiometer settings to color correct the images which appear on the video

screen 94 of the monitor 28 at the top of Figure 1.

The window generator 72 generates signals which create a "window" 98 in the picture on the screen of the monitor 28. This window preferably is visible; it is highlighted by attenuating the video signals in the portion 96 of the screen outside of the window, while leaving the signals within the window area at full brightness so that the portions of the picture within the window appear much brighter than those surrounding it. Since the window is located in the main monitor 28 rather than in some auxiliary monitor, the operator need not look anywhere else to see the window. This is another feature enhancing efficiency and speed of operation.

The signals necessary to create the window are delivered to the film chain 18 and the balance comparator 76 over lines 84. The window signal delivered to the comparator 76 disables the automatic balancing circuit 70 during receipt of the video signals forming the picture elements outside of the window, so that the automatic balancing circuit samples only the signals within the window.

Both the size and the position of the window 98 can be varied by means of the window control unit 74. For example, a smaller window 100 is shown in dashed outline in Figure 1. It not only has been made smaller, but it has been moved downwardly from the window 98. The area covered by the window can vary anywhere from the full size of the screen 94, down to a very small area.

The use of the window in color correction is highly advantageous. It allows one to limit the area of the picture sampled by automatic balance circuitry, or in manual color correction.

One of the problems solved by the use of the window include the one wherein most prior automatic balance circuits will erroneously detect a pale blue sky or a large pastel wall area as an area of the picture containing color errors needing correction. Thus, the circuitry would erroneously change the light pastel colors to white. By use of the movable window, the large pastel areas or the blue sky can be avoided in sampling, thus preventing some of the most significant errors of the prior art.

The window also can be used to sample only very small areas of the picture, such as those where there are pure blacks, whites or grays, in order to automatically set up black, white and gray correction signals. If desired, these correction signals then can be stored and used as reference correction signals for various other scenes in a piece of film or tape being converted to a color-corrected video tape recording.

WINDOW CONTROLS

The window controls shown in Figure 1 include a "Size" pushbutton 102, a "Position" pushbutton 106, and an automatic balance circuit start pushbutton (marked "ABC") 110. Depression of any of those buttons causes the window 98 to appear on the screen. Indicator lamps 104, 108 and 112 are provided to light up and thereby indicate when the "Size" or the "Position" or the "ABC" pushbutton has been enabled.

Also provided are multiple-function cursor

buttons 114, 116, 118, and 120. When the position button 106 is pushed to enter the position changing mode of operation, each of the four cursor buttons can be operated to move the entire window in the direction indicated by the arrow marked on the face of the cursor pushbutton.

When the "Size" pushbutton is used to enable the size mode of operation, the button 118 can be pushed to make the window larger in the horizontal direction, and the button 114 can be pushed to make it smaller in the horizontal direction. Similarly, the pushbutton 116 can be pushed to make the window larger vertically, and the button 120 can be pushed to make the window smaller vertically.

The circuitry used to carry out this operation is shown schematically in Figure 5. The horizontal and vertical drive signals are delivered from the film chain 18, telecine, VTR, or other video signal source over a cable 85 (Figure 1) as inputs to the window generator circuit shown in Figure 5.

The vertical drive signal is supplied over a line 122 to the "pre-load" terminals of two programmable digital counters T1 and T2. The horizontal drive signal is supplied over a line 24 to the clock terminal of the first counter T1 and the output of the first counter T1 is supplied to the clock terminal of counter T2.

The horizontal drive signal also is supplied on the pre-load lines of two other programmable counters T3 and T4.

The counters actually used are #8253 Programmable Interval Timers sold by Intel Corporation. They count down to zero from the preset count, and turn on upon receipt of a positive going signal on the clock line.

A four megaHertz oscillator 128 is triggered by the horizontal drive line 124 and supplies clock pulses to the clock input of counter T3 in synchronism with the horizontal drive pulses. The output of the counter T3 is supplied as a clock input to the counter T4.

The outputs of counters of T2 and T4 are supplied as inputs to AND gate 130 which supplies an output pulse to turn on a FET switch 134 which forms the of an attenuating network 132.

The window generator circuit 72 operates to create a signal which closes the switch 134, thus connecting all video signals to ground through an attenuating resistor 136, for all signals outside of the window. This causes those areas of the picture outside of the window to darken, thus highlighting the picture portions within the window.

The output of the AND gate 130 also is supplied over line 84 to the film chain 18 and the balance comparator 76 (see Figure 1). The video signal, whether attenuated or unattenuated is delivered over line 26 to the monitor 28.

A microprocessor 126 is provided to supply variable program information to the four programmable counters T1, T2, T3 and T4. It receives as inputs signals from the four cursor pushbuttons, and the ABC, size, and Position pushbuttons.

The waveforms of the signals used in controlling the positions of the top and bottom edge of the

window are shown in Figure 6. The vertical drive signal ("VDR") is shown at the top of Figure 6. The horizontal drive signal ("HDR") is shown in the middle of Figure 6. Each horizontal drive signal is shown as a negative spike, a waveform which is achieved by known means. Only a portion of the pulses of the horizontal drive signal for one full line is shown in Figure 6.

In the bottom portion of Figure 6 are shown waveforms of the outputs of the counters of T1 and T2.

The output of counter T1 goes negative in response to receipt of the vertical drive pulse. When it has counted down to zero from the count programmed into it, the output of T1 goes positive, thus starting counter T2. Counter T2 then counts a predetermined number of horizontal drive pulses, thus in effect counting that number of horizontal lines of the picture, and then goes positive again, ending the counting sequence. The "AND" gate 130 is of the type requiring two negative signals on its inputs before it will produce an output. One of those negative signals is supplied by counter T2 during the interval marked "WINDOW" in Figure 6.

The waveforms illustrating the operation of counters T3 and T4 are shown in Figure 7. The horizontal drive signal "HDR" of Figure 6 is shown on a greatly enlarged time scale in Figure 7 so that only a little over one cycle of the horizontal drive signal is shown. During that time period, a predetermined number of clock pulses is delivered from the oscillator 128. Only some of the pulses are shown in Figure 7.

When the horizontal drive signal is detected, the output of T3 goes negative, and then again goes positive after it has counted a predetermined number of pulses. When the output of T3 goes positive, T4 starts and counts a predetermined number of clock pulses and then goes positive. The output of T4, when it is negative, thus defines the width of the window.

The positive output pulse on line 84 at the output of AND gate 130 in Figure 5 produces only when signals T2 and T4 are negative, that is, during the portion marked "WINDOW" in Figures 6 and 7.

Through conventional programming, the microprocessor 126 causes the window to change size and position by changing the programming of the counters T1, T2, T3 and T4. When the Position pushbutton 106 is pushed, it stays on until pushed again to release it. During operation with the Position button pushed, depression of the cursor 116 causes a reprogramming of counter T1 so that its output goes positive at a lower count, thus moving the entire window upwardly. Similarly, operation of the cursor 120 increases the starting count of T1 and moves the window downwardly.

Similarly, depression of the cursor 118 during this mode of operation causes the output change of T3 to occur at a higher count, thus moving the entire window to the right. Depression of the cursor 114 causes the starting count of T3 to decrease, thus moving the window to the left.

In each case, the amount of movement of the window is proportional to the length of time that the

cursor is held in, and movement stops when the cursor is released and the pushbutton springs back outwardly.

When operated in the Size mode by depression of the Size enabling button 102, the programming of the counters is changed in the following manner. The size of the window is changed symmetrically with respect to the center of the window; that is, when a dimension of the window changes, it changes by the same amount on both sides of a central axis. Thus, when the width of the window is enlarged, the starting count of the counter T3 is reduced, while that of counter T4 is increased, with the amount of decrease in T3 being one-half of the increase in T4. When the width is reduced, the opposite operation takes place; that is, the count of T3 increases and that of T4 decreases, the decrease in T4 being twice the decrease in T3.

Similarly, in changing the height of the window, the count of T1 is varied in a sense opposite to the direction of change of the count of T2, with the count of T2 increasing or decreasing at twice the rate of the count of T1.

In the foregoing manner, the window size can be adjusted smoothly and symmetrically with respect to the center of the window.

AUTOMATIC BALANCE CIRCUIT

Referring again to Figure 5, the microprocessor 126 is programmed so that when the ABC button 110 is pressed, the equipment automatically samples the signals within the window for ninety cycles of the vertical drive signal; that is, for ninety consecutive fields of the video picture. This sampling process takes approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ seconds. At the end of this sequence, the automatic color correction will have been completed, and the window signal is cancelled so that the picture is displayed without the window on the screen 94 of the monitor 28. The window will not reappear until one of the Size or Position buttons 102 or 106 is depressed.

Now referring to Figure 3, the balance comparator 76 receives the luminance signal "Y" on terminal 140, and the R, B and G, signals on terminals 142, 144 and 146, respectively. The circuit 76 includes a white comparator 148, a gray comparator 150, a black comparator 152, a near-red comparator 154, a near-blue comparator 156, and a near-green comparator 158.

The purpose of each of the white, gray, and black comparators is best understood by reference to Figure 2. Figure 2 is a waveform diagram of a standard luminance ramp signal in which ranges of voltage are shown for black, gray and white values. Each of the white, gray and black comparators shown in Figure 3 has the purpose of setting the acceptable range of white, gray and black signals, as illustrated in Figure 2, and producing an output signal whenever the luminance signal actually detected is within that predetermined range.

Referring the upper left-hand corner of Figure 3, the white comparator circuit 148 is shown in detail. However, the details of the other comparators are not shown, since they are identical to those of the white

comparator. The comparator 148 uses a high-speed, dual-section voltage comparator integrated circuit chip 160, such as a number 711 chip sold by Fairchild. The positive and negative input terminals of the operational amplifiers within the chip are connected together and, through a line 162 and a resistor to the luminance input line 140. A range-setting network 164 is provided. The network consists of a resistor connected in series with two potentiometers 168, 170 with 12 volts D.C. applied across the combination. A bias network 166 also is provided. By the adjusting potentiometers 168 and 170, the range of voltages within which the comparators will produce an output is set. Range-setting networks 172 and 174 for the gray and black components are identical to network 164.

The signal on the output lead H1 of the comparator 148 has the waveform shown in Figure 2; that is, it is a negative-going pulse. The time duration T3 of the pulse depends upon the white voltage range setting, and the rate of change of the luminance voltage while it is within the white range. Thus, the output of each of the white, gray and black comparators, as illustrated in Figure 2, is a pulse whose time duration varies with the rate of change of the luminance signal within its range. Of course, the time during any horizontal scan in which each of the three signals occurs depends upon the instantaneous variations of the luminance signal along the horizontal trace.

The other three comparators of the circuit 76 are designed to produce an output only if the red or blue or green signal at a given instant is within a given relatively narrow range or "tolerance" above or below a reference. Thus, an output signal is given by each of the latter comparators only when the red signal deviates from a balanced condition by a relatively small amount. This is done in order to prevent an indication of an error when color in the picture actually is desired.

The tolerance level, or the range within which each signal can vary so as to produce an output from the comparator, is set by a potentiometer network 176 which is connected between one of the comparator input leads for each of the three comparators 154, 156 and 158. The other input lead for the comparator is connected to the luminance input line 140. The voltage drop across the network 176 thus defines the tolerance.

CONTROL KNOB SCANNING AND ZEROING

Before proceeding with the description of the automatic balancing circuit, it will be explained how the settings of the control knobs in the control panels are communicated to the computer and the remainder of the system.

Referring now to Figure 4, one of the control knobs is indicated at 262. It is coupled directly to a shaft-position encoder 264 which converts the position of the knob into a digital signal. That digital signal is delivered to a counter 260, whose count is delivered to the computer over line 38, and to other parts of the system where needed.

The output of each counter 260 for each of the control knobs is scanned rapidly and repetitively by

a multiplexing circuit (not shown) for a time period of approximately seven microseconds. The storage matrix 80 shown in Figure 3 is provided in order to store sample voltages during a sampling interval, and then later deliver appropriate correction signals to each of the counters 260 during a readout cycle.

Although these functions could be provided by a properly programmed general purpose digital computer, in the mode of the invention described herein, the sampling and storage is analog and is later converted into digital form for use in the color correction process.

Each knob preferably is electrically returned to zero after each scene in a scene-by-scene color corrector by resetting the appropriate counter 260.

STORAGE MATRIX

The timing logic circuit 78 shown in Figure 1 contains the circuitry necessary for performing the timing functions to be described below, and to scan the various control potentiometers as described above. The details of such logic are not disclosed herein because they would be readily evident to one skilled in the art and are not necessary to a description of the invention. However, certain switches forming a part of the logic circuit 78 are shown in Figure 3 beneath the numeral 78. These switches bear reference numerals 178, 180 and 182. They are FET switches, as are all of the switches shown in the matrix circuit 80.

Each of the switches 178, 180 and 182 operates to switch the matrix circuit between two modes; an output mode and an input mode. The switches are shown in the output mode condition. The duration of the input mode is the time necessary for displaying one complete field, and the switches switch the matrix to the output mode during the vertical interval.

During the input mode, the switch 178 conducts output signals from the white comparator 148 to the gate leads of four FET storage switches 202, 212, 220 and 230, arranged in a vertical "GAIN" column in Figure 3. Connected to one of the source and drain terminals of each switch is a capacitor 208, 210, 218 or 228 which is connected to ground. The other lead is connected to a data line 205, 207, 209 or 211. Each of the storage switches 202, 207, 209 or 211. Each of the storage switches 202, etc., together with its capacitor, comprises an integrating sample-and-hold circuit. The capacitor is charged through the "on" resistance of the FET switch, and thus integrates the signals it receives and stores their average value.

Connected in series with the data line 205 are the source and drain path of another FET switch 184 which, when closed, applies the red video signal R to line 205. Connected in line 205 at a point beyond the connections of switches 202, 204 and 206 is another FET switch 186.

The switch 184 is closed only when a "near-red" signal is applied to the gate lead of the switch to turn it on. The "gain" switches 202, 212, 220 and 230 are turned on only while an output signal appears at the output of comparator 148. Thus, during the time when both a near-red and a HI signal are received, a signal is stored by the switch 202 and its capacitor.

Similarly, while both of the near-blue and MID signals are received, other signals are stored by switch 212 and its capacitor. Also, when both a near-green and a LO signal are received, a signal is stored by switch 220 and its capacitor.

When the vertical interval arrives, the switches 178, 180 and 182 change state and assume the position shown in Figure 3. During this period of time, the switch 184 is turned off, and the switch 186, previously closed, now is turned on by a signal called "R Scan" which is developed by the timing logic circuit 78. The "GAIN" notation on the lower contact of switch 178 indicates only that a sampling signal is applied to that terminal during a period in which gain sampling signals are supplied. The notations "GAM" and "PED" on the contacts of switches 180 and 182 similarly indicate the separate application of sampling signals during gamma and pedestal sampling, respectively, so that the three sampling modes operate in sequence and not simultaneously.

During the GAIN sampling mode, the switches 202, 212, 220, and 230 again are closed. Concentrating first on the switch 202, since the switch 184 is closed and the switch 186 is open, the signal stored on the capacitor connected to switch 202 will be delivered through the switch 186 through output amplifier 200 to a terminal marked "COMP". Since the switch 186 is open while switches 190 and 194 remain closed, because of sequential scanning signals applied to those switches, one and only one output signal is supplied at a given time to the amplifier 200 from the matrix 80 during the readout phase.

The operation of the sections for receiving the blue and green signals is similar to that described above for the red signals. During storage, the switch 180 allows the second vertical column of FET switches 204, 214, 224 and 232 to be turned on. Similarly, the output of the black comparator turns on a third vertical column of FET switches 206, 216, 226 and 234.

During readout, during the "B scan" interval, switch 190 is closed, and 188 is open, so that GAIN, GAMMA and PEDESTAL signals which have been stored for the blue channel are read out and delivered to the output circuit in sequence.

The operation of the switch 192 and the switch 194 to similarly store and then read out the GAIN, GAMMA and PEDESTAL for green is similar and will not be described in detail here.

During the storage mode, the luminance signal is delivered through a FET switch 196 to each of the switches 230, 232, and 234 for storage. At this time, the "Y select" gate signal at an output FET 198 is such as to keep that switch closed.

When the readout mode is reached, the Y select signals applied to switches 196 and 198 reverse with respect to one another, and the stored luminance signals are delivered sequentially to the "REF" output terminal.

The circuit shown in the lower portion of Figure 4 is referred to as "successive-approximation analog-to-digital converter".

The "COMP" and "REF" signals

terminals so marked at the left hand portion of the drawing. The "COMP" signal is delivered to one input terminal of a comparator circuit 238. The reference signal is delivered to a summing node 235 where it is added to a feedback signal on line 248. The sum of those signals is delivered through an operational amplifier 236 to the second input of the comparator circuit 238.

The comparator detects any difference between the "COMP" input signal and the reference signal, and produces an output signal which causes a flip flop circuit 240 to change its state and start an oscillator 242 running. The output of the oscillator circuit forms the signal on line 93 (see Figure 1 as well as Figure 4) which is delivered to the circuitry shown in the upper portion of Figure 4 for sequentially driving the counters 260 connected with each control potentiometer to perform the desired color correction.

The signal on line 93 also is delivered to a digital counter 244 whose output is delivered to a digital-to-analog converter 246 whose output is delivered on line 248 to the summing node 235. As the total count produced by the oscillator 242 increases, the analog signal on line 248 increases until the two signals delivered to the input of the comparator circuit 238 match, and the oscillator turns off.

The signals on line 93 are delivered to a multiplexing circuit 254 which is used to deliver signals over one line 258 of nine output lines 256 to the counter 260 of each of the red, green and blue gain, gamma and pedestal potentiometers in the color balance bank 40 in Figure 1. The 8 lines which are shown not connected to anything in Figure 4 are connected to counters similar to the one shown in Figure 4 for each of the other 8 color balance knobs. A sequencing signal supplied on line 266 by the control logic circuit enables each of the output lines 256 and 258 in proper sequence and at the proper time to deliver the signal to the right control knob circuit.

An adjustment circuit 250 is provided with a bank of nine potentiometers 252. The output of the potentiometers 252 is connected by a line 254 to the comparator to set a bias for the comparator which will have the effect of increasing or decreasing the correction signal. Each of the nine resistors 252 is provided in order to adjust one of the nine color balance potentiometers.

Signals on line 92 enable each of the potentiometers in sequence, in the same sequence that the multiplexer 252 is operated. The circuit 250 is a readily available integrated switching network which sequentially connects each of the potentiometers 252 to a voltage supply.

LIGHT-PEN EMBODIMENT

Figure 8 shows schematically what is commonly known as a "light pen" 268. This is a well-known, pencil-shaped object the tip of which can be placed against the screen 94 of the monitor 28 to sample the signals within a small area under the tip of the pen. Such a pen can be used, in an alternative embodiment of the invention, to sample the signals in a very small area of the screen. The light pen is

used instead of the window 98.

Other known alternatives to the use of a variable window include such devices as a "touch-screen", in which an embedded wire grid or a light beam or ultrasonic beam grid is used in connection with the screen so that when one touches his finger to a specific location on the screen, the location will be detected, and this detection can be used in the same manner described above for the light pen or a small window.

Other means may be used, if desired, to produce the effect produced by the window of the present invention; that is, to provide for the sampling of only a limited area of the video picture.

OPERATION

The operation of the invention now will be described without describing the function of each of the pushbuttons in the panel 14. Those functions are described in detail in the "Luminance" and "Rainbow" patents identified above, and that description need not be repeated here.

When a motion picture film or video tape is to be corrected, a preferred first step in operating the system is to set reference values for the color corrections. Thus, the "set reference" button on the lower panel 14 is pressed, a piece of test film is run in the projector 16 or telecine, or a standard gray scale is used and the various control knobs are adjusted until a pleasing picture is obtained. Then, the values set by the knobs are entered in memory by pressing the "confirm" button, and the machine is ready to correct film. Alternatively, in accordance with the present invention, if the test picture is not too far out of balance, the "ABC" button can be pressed to create an automatic color balance. If this is not entirely satisfactory, manual adjustment of the color balance knobs can be used to make the balance exactly to the liking of the operator. Then the other knobs are operated, and the color corrections, both those made automatically and those made manually, are stored in the memory of the computer 30. In any event, the use of the ABC circuit will greatly speed the balancing procedure.

It should be understood that the step of setting references usually is done only once each day of operation, and is preferred, but not essential.

The film to be corrected is placed in the projector 16 or film scanner. Then the film is positioned so that the first frame is displayed, or some other frame desired for use as a starting frame is displayed. The "load count" and "confirm" buttons are pushed to reset the frame counter to zero. Then the film is run until a scene needing correction is displayed. The projector is stopped, and the "notch" switch is pressed to identify the frame with an "event number", which then is stored in memory. The color corrections which are applied to the picture displayed on the monitor screen are the reference corrections set in the first step of operation. If any of the corrections is not satisfactory, then new adjustments to the old corrections or totally new color corrections can be made.

In either event, if any adjustments are necessary, the present invention can be used to great

advantage. The automatic corrections, like the manual corrections, can be re-used with or without modifications. Since the achievement of a color balance in a new scene often is a time consuming procedure, use of the automatic color balance circuit will greatly speed the correction procedure.

The use of the window described above allows the operator to sample only specified portions of the picture so as to avoid many of the problems experienced with prior automatic balancing circuits. By excluding large pastel areas, for example, a major source of trouble is eliminated.

When the color correction process has been completed, the color corrections, both automatic and manual, are stored in memory by pressing the "mix" button. Depressing the "mix" button automatically transfers the new correction values to the color correction device so that the monitor displays a picture using the adjusted values.

This procedure then can be repeated for each other scene or frame needing color correction, so that the event number and corrections are stored in memory for every scene or frame to be corrected.

When it is desired to produce a color-corrected video tape copy, the image medium is rewound, the video tape recorder 20 is turned on, and either the "run mode" or the "load mode" is selected. In either case, corrected color component values previously stored are read out of memory under the control of the frame counter in the computer so as to deliver color-corrected signals to the video tape recorder to produce a fully color-corrected video tape 22.

Accordingly, the system shown in Figure 1 can be used to quickly and efficiently color correct motion picture film or video signals from other teleclines or sources such as video tape recorders, and produce a color-corrected video tape.

It should be understood that the term "color correction" herein includes the creation of additional new color combinations some of which might not have been achieved before.

COLOR MATCHING

The invention can be used to great advantage in automatic color matching; that is, in automatically matching the color of a colored area to that of a pre-existing standard, so as to improve both the speed and quality of color correction.

In this embodiment, it is preferred to use either a light-pen or a touch-screen to define a small sample area on the monitor screen. The operator places the light pen on the monitor screen at a location where the picture is supposed to be black. The machine then automatically corrects the pedestal for R, G and B to the level sufficient to produce a neutral black.

Then, the machine sequences automatically, or the operator presses a "gray" button (not shown) and locates the light pen in an area of the picture which is supposed to be gray, and the machine automatically compensates or corrects the gamma of R, B and G to give a neutral gray. Next, the machine sequences automatically, or the operator presses the white button and locates the light pen at a white portion of the screen, and the machine automatically adjusts the gain of R, B and G to give a

neutral white. Then, the gain, gamma and pedestal correction signal values are stored for that frame or scene.

When a new scene is defined as in the Rainbow patent, the corrections are executed as described in that patent.

If there is a particular area of the scene for which a specific color is required to be stored, such as for the color of a product, or flesh tones of a person's face, or a blue sky, etc., a first "memory-select" button (not shown) is pressed. Then, the light pen is directed to that portion of the picture, and the full video levels, at that picture location, for yellow, green, cyan, blue, magenta and red signals are stored, and/or the values of I and Q signals are stored. The luminance value also is stored.

The same procedure can be repeated for each subsequent scene, or frame, or for a different specifically colored object in the same frame. When a particular object appears in a new scene which has appeared in a previous scene, the light pen is directed to that object and the trigger 271 (Figure 8) on it is operated. The resulting signal from the light pen is used to form a small window which thereafter behaves in the manner described above for the window 98. Then, the luminance of the new object is compared with the luminance of the same object in the previous scene. If there is any difference between the two, the values of either I and Q, or red, green, blue, magenta, cyan and yellow are multiplied by the factor necessary to multiply the luminance to make the two luminances equal. Then, the resulting hue and saturation signals for red, green, blue, magenta, cyan and yellow, or I and Q, are compared with the prior values, and correction signals for each of the values are developed in the manner described above for the automatic balance circuit. Then, the correction values are stored for that frame and used in the manner described above.

Some of the advantages of this system and method are:

It allows unskilled operators to do accurate color corrections quickly.

The color corrections are much faster than in the past, even for experienced operators.

It allows the more skilled operators to be more accurate because they do not have to remember, from one scene to the next, what the color of a given item is supposed to look like. That is, for example, once the Eastman Kodak yellow is correct, the operator can repeat the color quickly for each subsequent scene in which it appears, without having to stop and make an independent judgment as to the correctness of the color in that scene.

SCENE-CHANGE DETECTION

The methods of operation described above constitute scene-by-scene or frame-by-frame color correction in which the picture remains stationary while color correction is in process. In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, in certain applications it may be possible to further speed the color correction process by the provision of an automatic scene-change detector, of which several are known. The color corrections developed

by the automatic circuit are stored, as well as the event number created by the automatic scene detector so that, on a second run through, the stored corrections would be utilized automatically to produce the color corrected video tape, all without stopping the film or tape during the color correction process. By pre-setting the window to an area of the film where it is not expected that troublesome portions of the picture such as blue sky and pastel walls might occur, in many instances the problems plaguing prior automatic color corrections circuits can be avoided so that satisfactory color correction can be achieved in a very short time.

One type of scene change detector is shown in Figure 1. A threshold detector circuit 272 is connected to the output of the storage matrix 80. When the error signals output from the matrix 80 exceed the pre-set threshold value, a scene-change signal is delivered to the timing logic circuit 78 and then to the computer 30 over line 274. Such a detection event is stored as a new event number, and the color correction stored thereafter until the next event is performed automatically as described above. Alternatively, the running of the film or other medium can be stopped by the detection signal to allow manual correction.

OTHER VARIATIONS

The use of ninety consecutive sampling cycles as described above is not absolutely necessary. It is used in the preferred embodiment described above primarily because the settings of the specific potentiometer counters used can be changed only in certain relatively small increments. This, however, is easily changed, if desired, so that a full 1½ seconds would not be necessary for the sampling cycle, and automatic scene-by-scene color correction "on-the-fly" can be made feasible.

However, there is an advantage to sampling over a larger number of cycles and thus changing the color signals more gradually. This tends to prevent over-correction and "hunting" in the correction process which might occur if changes were made in relatively large increments or all at once.

Returning now to the operational method, it is possible that the automatic balancing circuit of the present invention will be useful in the direct broadcasting of films over the air. If, under the circumstances, the slight delay needed to operate the automatic circuitry is neither discernible nor objectionable, or can be compensated for by a video delay device, then the "window" may make the automatic correction circuitry viable for over the air direct broadcasts.

The above description of the invention is intended to be illustrative and not limiting. Various changes or modifications in the embodiments described may occur to those skilled in the art and these can be made without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention.

CLAIMS

1. Apparatus for color-correcting video picture

signals, said apparatus comprising, in combination, display means for displaying on a video monitor screen a picture composed of said video picture signals, means for detecting the color characteristics of selected ones of said signals, selecting means for selecting the ones of said video picture signals for which said color characteristics are detected as those which create picture elements within a predetermined area which is less than the area of the entire picture, and means for developing correction signals for said selected picture signals.

2. Apparatus as in Claim 1 including primary signal means for supplying signals representing the primary color components of said picture signals, and in which said correction means comprises automatic color balancing means for automatically balancing the primary color signals with respect to one another.

3. Apparatus as in Claim 1 in which said selecting means includes means for defining a visible window area on said screen, said selected signals comprising those which create picture elements within said window, and means for selectively changing the size and the position of said window on said screen.

4. Apparatus as in Claim 3 including means for attenuating video picture signals which create other picture elements outside of said window, whereby the picture elements within said window are highlighted relative to said other picture elements.

5. Apparatus as in Claim 2 in which said video picture signals include red, blue and green color signals, and a luminance signal, said color balancing means including means for comparing each of said red, blue and green signals with said luminance signal, and means for adjusting each of said red, blue and green color signals to attain a predetermined relationship with said luminance signal.

6. Apparatus as in Claim 2 in which said video picture signals include red, blue and green color signals, including manually-operable means for producing adjustment signals for adjusting said primary color signals, said automatic color balancing means including means for adding correction signals to or subtracting correction signals from said adjustment signals, and means for adjusting said luminance signal.

7. In a color correcting system for color-correcting video picture signals representative of images stored by an image recording medium, display means for displaying on a video monitor screen a picture composed of said video picture signals, automatic correction means for detecting said picture signals and automatically producing correction signals to color-correct said signals, storage means for storing said correction signals, locating means for producing location signals indicating the location of each of said images in said recording medium, location storage means for storing said location signals, readout means for sequentially reading said location and correction signals out of storage in synchronism with said video picture signals, and combining means for selectively combining said video picture signals with said correction signals under the control of said

location signals to produce color-corrected video picture signals.

8. Apparatus as in Claim 7 including selecting means for selecting picture signals which create picture elements in only a portion of said screen, and means for enabling said automatic color corrector means to sample only said selected signals for determining the values of said color correction signals.
9. An apparatus as in Claim 7, including primary signal means for supplying signals representing the primary color components of said picture signals, and in which said correction means comprises automatic color balancing means for automatically balancing the primary color signals with respect to one another.
10. Apparatus as in Claim 8, in which said selecting means includes means for defining a visible window area on said screen, said selected signals comprising those which create picture elements within said window, and means for changing the size and location of said window on said screen.
11. Apparatus as in Claim 9 including means for producing a luminance signal representing the luminance of said picture signals, said color balancing means including means for comparing each of said red, blue and green signals with said luminance signal, and means for adjusting each of said red, blue and green color signals to attain a pre-determined relationship with said luminance signal.
12. Apparatus for color-correcting video picture signals, said apparatus comprising, in combination, display means for displaying on a video monitor screen a picture composed of said video picture signals, including primary signal means for supplying signals representing the "red", "blue" and "green" components of said picture signals, and the luminance of said signals, means for separately varying each of said red, blue and green color component signals and said luminance signal, automatic color balancing means including means for comparing each of said red, blue and green signals with said luminance signal, and means for adjusting each of said red, blue and green color signals to attain a pre-determined relationship with said luminance signal.
13. Apparatus as in Claim 12 including means for developing signals representative of the desired black, gray and white ranges of said luminance signal, and means for automatically correcting pedestal, gamma and gain of said red, blue and green signals in response to signals representative of said black, gray and white ranges.
14. Apparatus as in Claim 12 including means for enabling the correction of each of said red, blue and green signals only when the magnitude of that signal is different from a standard value by an amount less than a pre-determined tolerance value.
15. A method of color-correcting uncorrected video color component signals, said method comprising the steps of sequentially displaying video pictures composed from said uncorrected signals, locating scene changes by providing means for developing electrical scene-location signals,

- correcting said uncorrected signals by using automatic color correction means to automatically produce color correction signals for the displayed pictures, storing said color correction signals, and repeating said displaying, locating, correction making, and storing steps for each other scene requiring color correction, and reading said correction signals out of storage when the control of said scene location signals and using said correction signals to modify said uncorrected video color component signals.

16. A method as in Claim 15 including the step of limiting the signals sampled by said automatic color correction means to those forming picture elements in a limited area of said pictures.

17. A method as in Claim 15 in which said automatic color correction means includes primary signal means for supplying signals representing the primary color components of said picture signals, and in which said correction means comprises automatic color balancing means for automatically balancing the primary color signals with respect to one another.

18. A method as in Claim 15 including the step of stopping said sequential display step to provide a stationary display of a picture in a scene requiring color correction.

19. A method as in Claim 16 in which the portions of said pictures sampled by said automatic color correction means are selected from the group consisting of black, gray and white, the color correction values are automatic color balance signals for each portion, and utilizing said stored color balance signals as reference signals for color-correcting other video pictures.

20. Apparatus for electrically separating a selected area of a video picture from other areas of said picture in order to facilitate separate analysis or usage of said selected area, said apparatus comprising, in combination, first counting means for counting horizontal drive pulses in synchronism with the vertical drive signals for said picture, first indication means for producing, at pre-selected counts of said counting means, top and bottom indication signals to define the top and bottom edges of said selected area, a source of clock pulses whose frequency is substantially higher than that of said horizontal drive pulses, second counting means for producing, at pre-selected counts of said second counting means, left and right side indication signals to define the left and right edges of said selected area, and means for altering the transmission of video picture signals for other areas as defined by said top, bottom, left and right indication signals.

21. Apparatus as in Claim 20 in which each of said first and second counting means comprises programmable counters, programming means for changing the programming of said counters to selectively change the counts at which said indication signals are produced, and thereby selectively change the size and position of said selected area.

22. Apparatus as in Claim 21 in which each of said first and second counting means comprises a pair of

series-connected programmable counters, the output signal of each counter changing state when a pre-determined count is reached, the counting of the second counter being started by the change of state of the first, said changes of state creating said indication signals, said programming means comprising means for changing said count of the first counter in each pair to move said selected area, and for changing said count in the second counter of each pair, while changing said count of the first counter of each pair by one half of the count of second counter, and in a sense opposite to the sense of the change in the count of the second counter, to change the size of said area symmetrically with respect to its center.

23. Apparatus as in Claim 20 in which said altering means includes attenuator means for attenuating all of said video picture signals for said other areas, whereby images in said selected areas are highlighted.

24. A method of color correction of video signals comprising displaying a picture composed of said signals on a video monitor screen, sampling the video signals forming a limited zone of said picture, said zone limiting the signals sampled to those of a specific colored area, storing color component

signals for said colored area when it appears in one frame, displaying another colored area in another frame, said other colored area to have the same color as said first colored area, sampling said other colored area, recalling the stored component signals, automatically adjusting the component signals of said other area to those of the first area and storing the signals for adjusting the latter component signals.

25. A method as in claim 24 including limiting the sample taken of said second colored area to only the area containing the color to be adjusted.

26. A method as in claim 24 in which said sampling is done by a window generator or a light-pen, or a touch-screen.

27. A method as in claim 24 in which the values of the luminance signals of the first and second colored areas are equalized, and the I and Q or the hue and saturation of the color derivative signals are compared and equalized, the signal values necessary to create equalizations being stored.

28. A method of color correcting video signals substantially as hereinbefore described.

29. Apparatus for color correcting video signals substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

FIG. 1

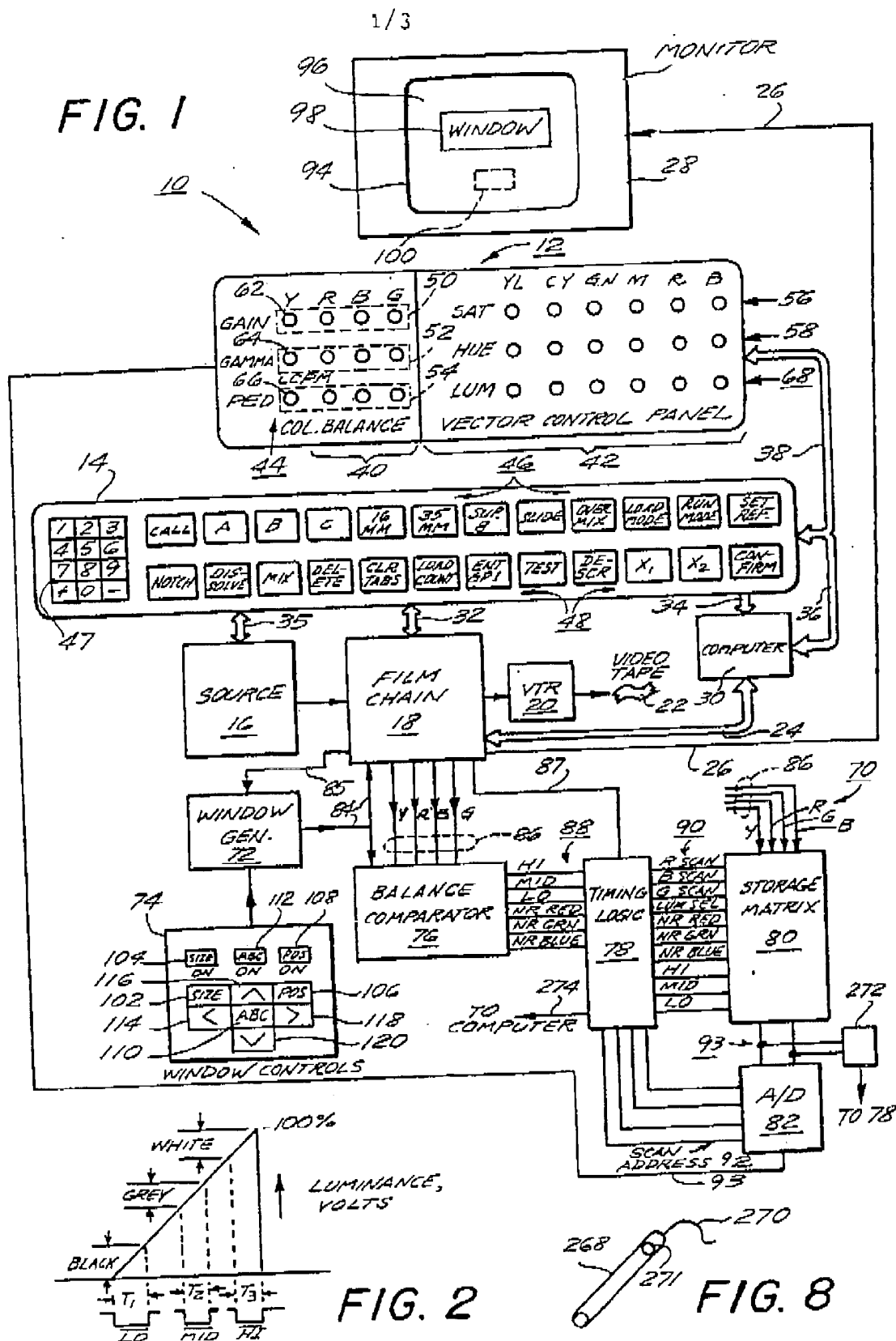
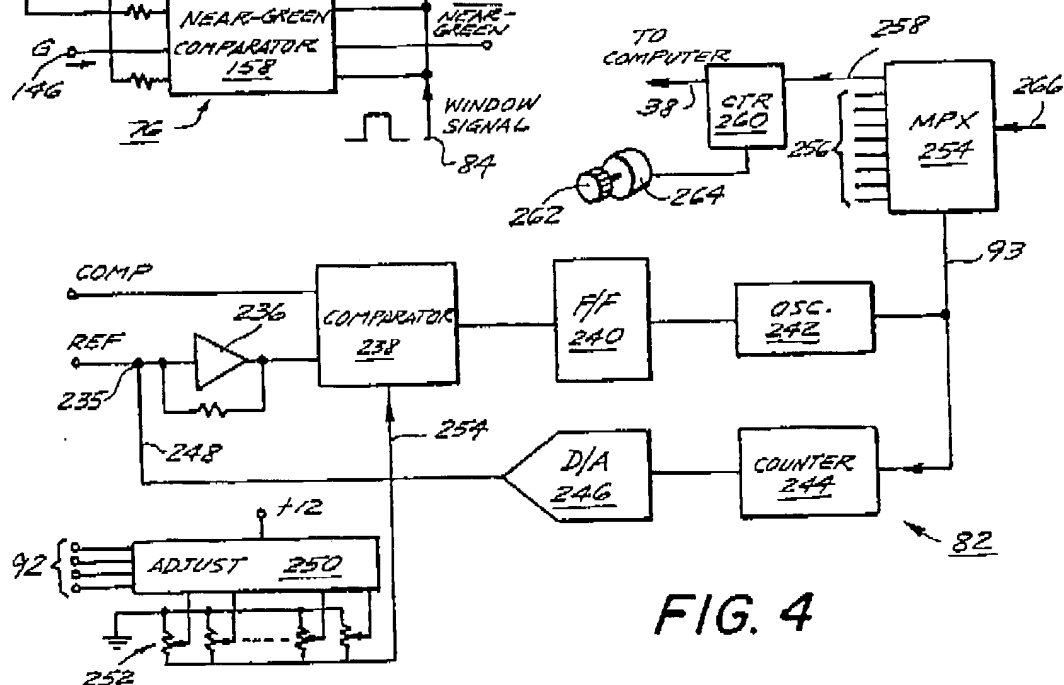
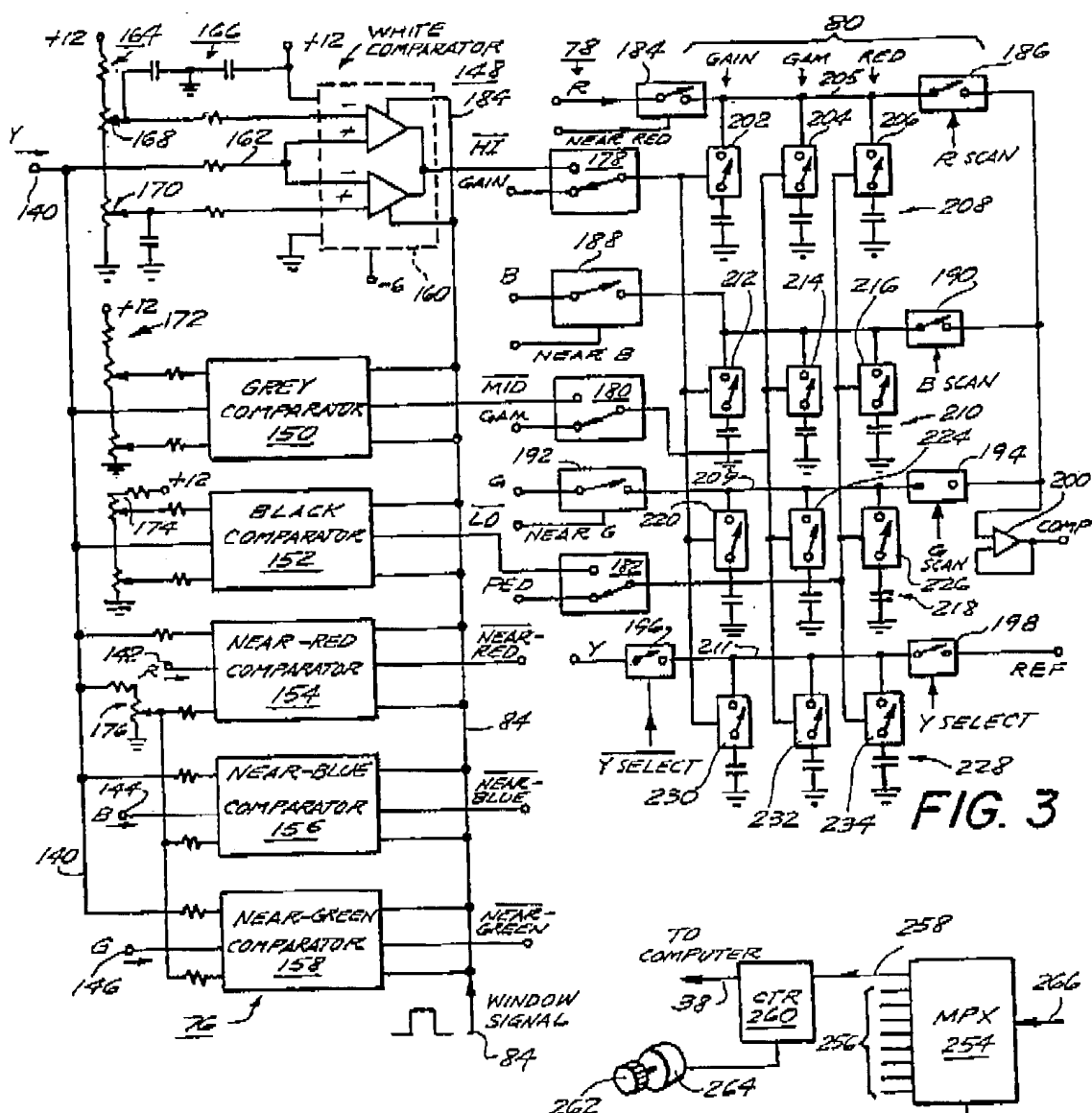


FIG. 8

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